

Bird Flu and Food Safety

Is it safe to eat poultry or eggs in the U.S.?

Yes, it is safe to eat poultry and egg products in the U.S. if food items are thoroughly cooked. Cooking temperatures of 165° F (74° C) or above kill the bird flu virus. Care must be taken to prevent cross contamination of raw poultry with ready to eat food or food contact surfaces.

Most poultry and eggs sold in the U.S are produced within the country. Federal, state, and local agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Center for Disease Control (CDC), and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) work together to prevent bird flu virus from entering into U.S. poultry flocks and food supply. No poultry from countries with confirmed cases of bird flu can be imported into the United States.

Can I get bird flu by eating poultry or eggs from sick birds?

No, you cannot get bird flu from properly cooked poultry or eggs, even if the products came from sick birds. It is safe to eat poultry and egg products in the U.S. if food items are thoroughly cooked to internal temperatures of 165° F (74° C) or above.

There is no evidence anyone has been infected with bird flu by eating thoroughly cooked poultry or egg products.

What are proper poultry preparation and cooking techniques?

Proper poultry cooking techniques will help prevent infection with bird flu virus and various other food-borne pathogens. Prevent food-borne illness by following these simple guidelines:

- Wash hands with soap and warm water before and after handling raw poultry and egg products
- Protect other foods from being contaminated by poultry and egg products
 - Use separate kitchen tools for preparing poultry and egg products
 - Clean cutting boards for poultry and other objects or surfaces that come in contact with raw poultry and egg products:
 1. Wash with soap and warm water
 2. Make disinfecting solution with three tablespoons of bleach and one quart of water
 3. Pour disinfecting solution over surface and let sit for a few minutes
 4. Rinse well before use or contact
 - Always separate raw poultry and egg products from cooked poultry and eggs
- Use a food thermometer to make sure that poultry and egg products have been thoroughly cooked to internal temperatures of 165° F (74° C) or above
- Cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm
- Use pasteurized egg products or treated shell eggs, for recipes, like Caesar salad dressing, meringues, and homemade ice cream, that call for raw or

undercooked eggs. Pasteurized egg products are available in retail markets, while treated shell eggs are available in a growing number of retailers and are clearly labeled.

Can I get bird flu by handling or preparing poultry or eggs from sick birds?

No, you cannot get sick by handling or preparing poultry or eggs from sick birds if proper precautions are used. Store-bought poultry and eggs are safe to prepare and eat. Only healthy birds are used for meat and egg production. Additionally, eggs are sanitized to kill viruses and bacteria on the shells.

Home slaughter and preparation of live birds for food is not safe. This process exposes people to the bird's droppings, blood, and intestines, all of which can contain bird flu virus if the bird is sick. This practice presents a risk for exposure to bird flu and other food-borne diseases.

To eliminate these risks, only buy poultry and egg products from approved sources, like stores or markets in the county. If you have chickens that lay eggs, be sure to clean the egg before breaking the shell because eggshells and eggs can be contaminated with the virus.

Can I get bird flu by eating raw or undercooked eggs?

You can get bird flu by eating raw or undercooked egg products. This is mainly a risk for people living in bird flu infected countries. Government agencies in the U.S. use specific control measures to prevent contaminated eggs and eggs from sick birds from entering the human food chain.

Since the bird flu virus can survive on eggshells and inside eggs, if you have a supply of eggs from your own birds, never eat them raw or undercooked. This reduces the risk for bird flu and other food-borne diseases.

Common homemade foods with raw or undercooked eggs that should be avoided include:

- Raw batter, fillings, or cookie dough made with raw eggs
- Beverages or drinks made with raw eggs, like homemade eggnog
- Dressings or sauces made with raw eggs, like Caesar salad dressing, Hollandaise sauce, or mayonnaise
- Desserts made with raw eggs like ice cream, meringues, or mousses

Commercial mayonnaise, dressings, and sauces containing pasteurized eggs are safe to eat.

How do I get more food safety information?

More food safety information is available from the San Diego County Food and Housing Division Deputy Desk at **1-619-338-2379**.

How do I get more information about bird flu?

More bird flu and food information is available at www.usda.gov/birdflu

People can also call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at **1-888-674-6854**

TTY: **1-800-256-7072**.

Health and Human Services Agency

Bird and Pandemic Flu
Information Line
1-888-633-1330

Department of Environmental Health

Dead Bird
Reporting Line
1-888-551-INFO (4636)